



Vital Behaviors

Due to the great work being done in high-performing urban schools both locally and nationally, it's possible to describe specific strategies and behaviors which lead to a high-performing culture in the urban school and ultimately drive outstanding student achievement gains. The vital behaviors are as follows:

1. Teachers Are Intensely Committed to Student Success

Teachers are prepared with dynamic, powerful lessons within their classrooms and also heavily incorporate elements of Lemov's taxonomy. Teachers volunteer to be accessible to students outside of school hours to assist (via phone or in person) with academic issues or other questions which might arise. There is a constant focus on student learning throughout the school, and teachers work collaboratively and reflectively to deliver excellence in the classroom.

2. Time on Task

The academic day includes a minimum of 90 minutes of Math and 90 minutes of English Language Arts instruction. In addition, students who are 5th grade and above and are more than one grade level behind spend extended time working on academics. This extended time includes: after school tutoring, Saturday school, and/or summer school.

3. Sweat the Details

Students must comply with the following:

- Be on time for school and class
 - Leaders and teachers relentlessly enforce punctuality and take issue with any tardy for any reason. Tardiness is clearly defined.
- Be dressed in school uniform
 - Leaders and teachers relentlessly enforce dress code and uniform requirements, paying attention to the smallest detail, including color of socks, non-white undershirts, or style of shoe.
- Complete all homework daily
 - Leaders and teachers follow up with intense consequences for missing homework. Consequences typically occur the same day.
- Be silent when others are speaking (Tracking)
 - Students are on task and engaged in academic work at all times especially when teachers, leaders, or peers request it.
- Sit up or stand in a respectful and appropriate manner
- Refrain from "tisking," "eye rolling," or any verbal or non-verbal disrespect of teachers.
 - Leaders and teachers intensely address even the smallest indication of disrespect whether verbal or non-verbal.

The school has a consistent system in place to positively reward students who follow these expectations and to enforce consequences when expectations are not met.

4. Focus on Student Performance Data

Leaders and teachers regularly use data to review student progress and to drive instructional decisions for individual students, both on the micro level with daily checks for understanding and on the macro level



with interim assessments. Leaders and teachers accept responsibility for student achievement and are persistently designing new ways to support students who are not reaching benchmarks and challenge those students who are.

5. Academic Intensity

As schools institute the 90 minutes per day of Math and ELA, they incorporate a more intense academic approach geared toward dramatically moving students academically. For example, the following model, while not required, has been found by several high-performing schools in Milwaukee to be transformative:

- a. Math
 - i. K-4th grade math curriculum is bumped up one grade level. Using Saxon for example, in K4 the teacher uses Saxon K, in K5 uses Saxon 1, in 1st grade uses Saxon 2, etc.
 - ii. For 5th grade and higher, use Accelerated Math for 100 minutes weekly.
- b. English Language Arts
 - i. Use explicit phonetics in K-4th grade curriculum as primary driver for reading program.
 - ii. For 5th grade and higher, use Accelerated Reading for 100 minutes weekly.
 - iii. Hire phonetic-focused Reading/ELA teaching coach or use SRA Reading Mastery scripted reading program (Nearly all high-performing urban elementary schools use one of these two approaches.)

Regardless of the age of the students, there is an intensely rigorous approach to academics driving students to achieve above grade level, no excuses. School leaders and teachers are relentlessly committed to achieving dramatic academic gains with their students and constantly agonize over results.

6. Joy

The school is filled with thematic motivational signs and slogans; teachers and school leaders use chants, poetry, recitation, singing, and other tools to bring a sense of joy to the learning process. School-wide management tools (STRONG or SLANT, e.g.) are used to positively frame expectations. Teachers and students are happy to be at school. Students are taught that the pursuit of academic success and success in life, while not always easy, is a joyful process. During the school day, teachers smile and regularly direct appropriate expressions of love and kindness toward students.

7. Student Attendance

All attendance is taken and recorded in the school office within 60 minutes of the start of the school day. When a student is absent, the absence is challenged. All school office personnel and leadership team members share this mentality. Unless the illness is severe, a student must be in school. If there has been no notification to the school, the school leadership team *takes action* to get the student to school, including driving to the house, if necessary, to procure the student. Daily attendance is posted prominently in the school hallway and updated within 90 minutes of the start of each school day.

8. Alumni are Tracked

Leaders intentionalize the process of tracking 100% of the school's alumni as a measure of the school's success and as a means for offering students continued support through high school into college.